

A Theory of Cold War Dynamics: U.S. Policy, Germany, and the Bomb*

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THE ABRUPT AND PEACEFUL END of the Cold War has rendered utterly suspect many of the assumptions and theories advanced to explain this strange conflict. It is our hypothesis—offered for research and debate—that the atomic bomb was a primary catalyst in creating the Cold War, and that, apart from the nuclear arms race itself, the most important specific role of nuclear weapons was to revolutionize American policy toward Germany. The bomb permitted U.S. leaders to do something no American president could otherwise have contemplated—rebuild and rearm the former Nazi state. This in turn had extraordinary, ongoing dynamic consequences. We shall suggest, further, that those who believed early on that a great power accommodation between America and Russia was possible were probably right—and that such an accommodation may have been delayed for four decades because the atomic bomb appeared at the precise moment when America and the Soviet Union were beginning to feel their way to a new post-World War II relationship. Not only do we believe our explanation of the Cold War brings with it a good mea-

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sure of common sense, but we will suggest that a vast body of archival research lends powerful support to the hypothesis. This is not to say that frictions, rivalries and areas of conflict would not have existed between the major powers had there been no atomic bomb. What needs to be explained, however, is the extreme over-militarization of great power relations that came to be called "the Cold War."¹

Historians like to see patterns, trends and continuity in long periods of development. They also often write (especially about the Cold War) as if what actually happened inevitably had to happen. Rarely do scholars pause to reflect upon the extreme chanciness of the timing of some historically important developments. Consider the pre-history of nuclear weapons.

Hans Bethe once observed that it was only very "slowly and painfully, through a comedy of errors, [that] the fission of uranium was discovered."² It was on a whim, for instance, that Enrico Fermi made his critical 1934 discoveries related to the capacity of the atom's nucleus to capture slow neutrons. At the time he was trying to explain why his laboratory was obtaining different radiation readings from different samples of aluminum. It turned out that he had been conducting the experiments on different tables, one wooden and one marble. As Bethe observed, the efficiency of slow neutrons might not have been discovered at this time "if Italy were not rich in marble.... A marble table gave different results from a wooden table. If it had been done [in America], it all would have been done on a wooden table."³

Broadly speaking, the developmental time track of twentieth century nuclear physics may be said to begin with Einstein's famous 1905 papers. It extends through his 1915 "first finished statement" on the general theory of relativity, through Leo Szilard's 1929 application for a patent for the cyclotron, on to James Chadwick's discovery of the possible existence of the neutron, through Fermi's 1934 neutron bombardment experiments, and on to Otto Hahn's 1938 discovery that uranium breaks into two parts when it absorbs a neutron.⁴

It is rarely acknowledged that had this line of development not been moving at this particular rate we would never have gotten to the 1939 Szilard-Einstein letter to Roosevelt, the 1941 Maud Committee report, and then to the Manhattan Project—to a sufficiently advanced point, that is, where the application of large sums of money and engineering expertise could have produced an atomic bomb by August 1945. As Bethe's remark suggests, the time track might just as well have been a decade or two slower, or (perhaps) faster. Only those unfamiliar with the oddities of the pacing of scientific discovery will believe that the time track inevitably had to have moved at this particular pace.

With this in mind, it is instructive to reflect on what might have happened (or, more precisely, what might probably not have happened) if this “independent track” of scientific historical development had not reached its fruition in 1945. What might the post-war world have looked like in the absence of an early American atomic monopoly?

The orthodox literature on the Cold War commonly avoids one of the most obvious and least understood changes the atomic bomb wrought on the U.S. policy; it literally revolutionized the U.S. approach to Germany.⁵ There is very little dispute that throughout World War II unquestionably the central post-war problem facing United States leaders was that of security—and above all, of how to control Germany. The obvious issue was how to insure that Germany would not start yet another, third world war in one century. “The German question,” as Herbert Feis observed, boiled down to: “What measures, acceptable to the conscience of our times, could eliminate the chance that they might rise from the rubble and strike out again?”⁶ Put another way—as McCloy noted in his diary—Germany was the “cockpit of our policy.”⁷

Although the “German problem” was extremely important, the choices available were far more constrained than is commonly realized. The main difficulty was that no American president could count on the public allowing him to keep a significant number of troops in Europe for very long after the war. “[D]omestic political realities,” as Stephen Ambrose has noted, simply “precluded the maintenance of a large, conscripted, standing army in postwar Europe.”⁸ Indeed, as early as November 1943 at the Teheran Conference, Roosevelt had informed Stalin that American forces would be withdrawn from Europe within one to two years of victory over the Nazis.⁹ Similarly, Roosevelt told Churchill in late 1944: “You know, of course, that after Germany’s collapse I must bring American troops home as rapidly as transportation problems will permit.”¹⁰ A few months later, at Yalta, the president told both leaders “that he did not believe that American troops would stay in Europe much more than two years.”¹¹ In fact, shortly after the war ended there were riots in Europe among American soldiers demanding immediate repatriation.¹²

In these circumstances the question facing United States leaders was what—specifically—was there to guarantee American security against a revival of Germany? And, too, what answer to this question might a president give to the American people which could survive political challenge?¹³ At the time of Roosevelt’s death the only concrete strategy available to any president was the consolidation of an alliance with the other great power which had an equally strong interest in keeping Germany down—namely, the Soviet Union. “It is by now a commonplace,” Willard Thorp, deputy to the assistant secretary of state for Economic

A. bomb
NATO
Germany

Affairs, characteristically noted, "that Germany cannot commit another aggression so long as the Big Three remain united."¹⁴ The essence of U.S. pre-atomic security policy for Europe was just that—an agreement, sealed at Yalta, for joint control of Germany by the United States and the Soviet Union (together, of course, with the lesser great power, Britain, and with the then still lesser power, France, added as well). "It is our inflexible purpose," Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill proclaimed, "to destroy German militarism and Nazism and to ensure that Germany will never again be able to disturb the peace of the world."¹⁵

Given his domestic political constraints, Roosevelt needed some rough agreement with the other dominant military power—the Soviet Union—to control Germany *directly*; and he needed some concrete way (beyond rhetoric) to weaken Germany's underlying military potential. Exaggerated discussions of "pastoralization" apart, the fact is Roosevelt's strategy centered on the notion of "industrial disarmament." The goal was to weaken Germany's "military-industrial complex" and simultaneously cement American-Soviet cooperation. Reductions in German industry could be used to provide the short-term reparations Stalin sought to help rebuild the war-torn Soviet Union.¹⁶

Since the Soviet Union desperately needed help in rebuilding its devastated society, it was agreed at Yalta that "to the greatest extent possible" there would be large-scale reparations taken out of the German economy, in the neighborhood of \$20 billion, half to go to the Soviet Union.¹⁷ At the same time, the extraction of "industrial reparations" was also understood as a way to weaken Germany's "military-industrial complex." In fact, the Yalta protocol stated that it was "to be carried out chiefly for the purpose of destroying the war potential of Germany."

Related to this, of course, were implications for Roosevelt's *de facto* acceptance of a Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe.¹⁸ To the extent there was certainty that Germany would not rise again, at least in theory, Soviet policy could be more relaxed in Eastern Europe.¹⁹ The overall understanding was embodied in the Yalta agreement: great power control of Germany, large-scale reparations, and an extremely vague declaration on Eastern Europe.

What is often overlooked is that from the American point of view, the advent of nuclear weapons gave Washington an alternative to constructing a European peace in cooperation with the Soviet Union. At Yalta, Washington had essentially agreed to a neutralized Germany. With the bomb, however, U.S. policy-makers realized they could afford the risks of acting unilaterally. The western portion of Germany could safely be reconstructed economically and, later, integrated into a West European military alliance. The atomic monopoly—and it alone—permitted this with little fear of German resur-

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gence and without regard to Soviet security interests. At Potsdam (July 17 to August 2, 1945), once the bomb had been successfully tested the basic Rooseveltian posture towards Germany at Yalta was abandoned. As Melvyn Leffler has observed, not only did American officials "distance themselves from the position on reparations taken by Roosevelt at Yalta," they also thereby committed an "overt violation of the meaning and spirit of the Yalta compromise."²⁰ The Yalta understanding had set German reparations at roughly \$20 billion (half of which would go to the Soviet Union).²¹

How and when this decision was made is crucial to an understanding of the bomb's role. There was no major shift in the stated position of the United States on the reparations-security issues during May and June. Despite the fact that numerous State and War Department officials ardently wished a stronger German economy (and therefore less reparations)—and even though there was concern about Russian machinery removals from Eastern Germany—the U.S. did not officially break with the Yalta reparations understanding throughout the summer.²² Indeed, on July 2, Joseph Grew went so far as to cable Edwin W. Pauley—Truman's reparations negotiator at Potsdam—that

the [State] Department is not opposed to the discussion of an amount of reparations. While it is felt that a figure of twenty billion dollars is too high and that one approaching twelve or fourteen billion dollars would be more appropriate, the twenty billion dollar figure may be adopted as a starting point for exploration and discussion.²³

American policy began to take on new and tougher dimensions in Eastern Europe once President Truman departed for Potsdam, and it similarly began to shift in connection with Germany. At Potsdam, the actual reparations negotiations focused around two quite specific questions: first, whether to set any fixed target for reparations; and, second, if a target were set, what would it be? If a target were set—and if the figure was large—the essence of Roosevelt's policy would be continued. If no target were set—or if a small figure were set—a very different approach would be implemented.

These questions first received serious consideration at lower levels on July 18. For three difficult days the Economic Subcommittee skirmished over such issues as the American insistence that "the necessary means must be provided for payment of imports...before reparation deliveries are made (i.e., there ought to be a 'prior charge' on the German economy to pay for imports before calculating reparations)."²⁴ The U.S.S.R., for its part, attempted to justify seizures of material in eastern Germany as "war booty" (as opposed to "reparations")—so that no charge against its ultimate claims would occur.²⁵

Only minimal progress had been made by the evening of July 21. At this point, however, things began to happen at quite a different level: sometime during the thirty-six hours between the evening of July 21 and the morning of July 23 the official position of the United States delegation became clear. A post-Potsdam report to the president provides this cool summary:

...the US Delegation to the Allied Commission on Reparations came to the conclusion that an "overall percentage" allocation of shares as between the Big Three was no longer feasible. The division of reparations...would have to be abandoned for some less controversial method of dividing what would be removed as reparations.²⁶ ?

Put baldly, the Yalta agreement—with its stipulation of fifty percent of a fixed sum in the range of twenty billion dollars to go to the Soviets—was simply abandoned. The United States now suggested that reparations essentially be taken from each zone by each occupying power rather than collectively from Germany as a whole. Since the Russians occupied predominantly agricultural areas while the West had the lion's share of industry, the implications were obvious. The new stance was far tougher than anything which had previously been proposed. Not only would there be no "fixed target," even the idea of "percentages" was now gone. As Carolyn Eisenberg has noted, the decision was "an open break with Yalta"²⁷—and as many others have observed, the idea that each side would simply focus on its own zone also inevitably implied that four-power control of a unified German economy was essentially, if implicitly, laid to rest.

Subsequently, the State Department produced a variety of "reasons" for the American reversal. The fact is, however, reparation issues had not even been seriously discussed at the Foreign Ministers' level when the new position was put forth. Secretary of State Byrnes was quite explicit about the source of his new confidence in private discussions with Joseph Davies: "details as to the success of the Atomic Bomb...gave him confidence that the Soviets would agree as to these difficulties."²⁸ Much more fundamentally, he also was no longer worried about the security problem: "[I]n the last analysis, it [the atomic bomb] would control."²⁹ We should note that several United States policy-makers (especially Benjamin V. Cohen) believed that international control of the Ruhr industrial heartland might be the key to a compromise approach.³⁰ In principle, this could achieve security without necessarily weakening the German economic reconstruction effort. But—again, shortly after the report of the successful nuclear test—Byrnes rejected this proposal as well.

A brief review of the time-table at Potsdam helps illuminate some of the specific steps and relationships:

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Germany:
(reconstruction)
US (+SU)
monopoly
west
Germany

(But SU out, but, but)
have a monopoly with NATO (Germany + US =)

Formation of NATO: no German Bank

Alternative: US FS withdrawal:

withdrawal of

"superiority"

(→ US if SU military threat)

July 21, 1945, 11:35 a.m.—General Groves' dramatic report of the Alamogordo test arrives.³¹

July 22, 1945, 11:10 a.m.—Following disagreement in the Economic Subcommittee, the reparations question is referred to the Foreign Ministers—and put on the next day's agenda by Byrnes.³²

July 23, 1945, 10:00 a.m.—Byrnes telephones Secretary of War Stimson and asks for further information "as to the timing of the S-1 program."³³

July 23, 1945, 10:30 a.m.—Byrnes meets with Molotov and informally indicates the new U.S. reparations position ("under the circumstances he wondered whether it would not be better to give consideration to the possibility of each country taking reparations from its own zone").³⁴

July 23, 1945, 11:00 a.m.—at the Foreign Ministers' meeting Byrnes declares: "...The American position is clear. It is the position of the United States that there will be no reparations until imports in the American zone are paid for. There can be no discussion of this matter."³⁵

From this time forward there were no real negotiations. Truman made it clear that he was leaving Potsdam as soon as possible, with or without an agreement. Even the proposal that each side satisfy its reparations requirements from its own zone (with a certain modest percentage to be transferred to the Soviet zone from the West) was to be "conditional upon agreement on two other proposals..." relating to the treatment of Italy and the satellite nations and the Polish western border.³⁶ As Byrnes later recalled, he was blunt: "I told him [Molotov] we would agree to all three or none and that the President and I would leave for the United States the next day."³⁷

Nor, again, is the source of such confidence in doubt. Using the same characteristic poker imagery he had used in connection with the atomic bomb earlier in the summer, Truman wrote his wife Bess on July 31: "He (Stalin) doesn't know it but I have an ace in the hole and another one showing—so unless he has threes or two pair (and I know he has not) we are sitting all right."³⁸ The tough stance worked—probably because the Russians had little alternative—and in the end Byrnes' "package deal" became one of the very few substantive agreements reached at Potsdam. As John Lewis Gaddis has drily commented: "News of the secret explosion in the New Mexico desert...greatly cheered Truman and his advisers, contributing to their firm stand on German reparations..."³⁹ Stalin accepted the West's de facto abandonment of the Yalta reparations accord⁴⁰ (and, too, some minor alterations in connection with the Balkans); and the United States and Britain accepted the Oder-Neisse Polish border

understanding (with the proviso that "the final delimitation of the western frontier of Poland should await the peace settlement").⁴¹

The atomic bomb also helped reduce the other truly fundamental difficulty facing the United States in Europe, economic chaos. Abandoning Roosevelt's Yalta reparations stand and reducing the amount of reparations extracted from Germany was part and parcel of an effort to strengthen Germany's contribution to continental economic stability—and, as we have just seen, the bomb was pivotal in this connection. Throughout the spring and summer of 1945, leaders had been deeply worried about the European economy in general—and about social and political unrest in particular. After visiting Germany in April, John J. McCloy had brought back reports of "near anarchy" and utter devastation—"something that is worse than anything probably that ever happened in the world."⁴² "The problem which presents itself,..." Stimson wrote just before details of the atomic test arrived, "is how to render Germany harmless as a potential aggressor, and at the same time enable her to play her part in the necessary rehabilitation of Europe."⁴³ Within hours of his statement, however, the problem had been resolved at Alamogordo. Although Truman continued to endorse "industrial disarmament" as a way to achieve European security, after the successful atomic test the issue took on a distinctly secondary importance.

Further evidence on this point can be found in two August 22, 1945 meetings with General de Gaulle. Here President Truman and Secretary Byrnes together urged that "the German danger should not be exaggerated." De Gaulle, however, continued to emphasize French fears—and, like Roosevelt's advisers and the Russians, urged direct security measures to manage the longer term German threat (including international control of the Ruhr and severing the West bank of the Rhine). Finally, Truman and Byrnes—responding specifically to de Gaulle's continued concern about Germany—became blunt: "...the atomic bomb will give pause to countries which might [be] tempted to commit aggression."⁴⁴ Although American policy makers continued to worry about the potential power of a united German state for a substantial period, very early in the postwar period they clearly understood that Germany no longer presented a fundamental military threat.⁴⁵

The problem was obviously not quite the same from the point of view of the Soviet Union. In the first place the new weapon, itself, was now a threat. "Before the atom bomb was used, I would have said, yes, we could keep the peace with Russia," a worried Eisenhower observed in an August 1945 visit to Moscow. "Now I don't know.... People are frightened and disturbed all over. Everyone feels insecure again."⁴⁶ But generalized fear engendered by the new weapon was only one aspect of the

problem. In the fall of 1945 and spring of 1946, partly as a result of French obstruction on the Allied Control Council, partly out of understandable fear of economic chaos and political disorder, and partly—but not at the outset⁴⁷—out of frustration with Soviet policy, American policy shifted from industrial disarmament to the rebuilding of German economic power. A major turning point was probably the decision to stop reparation shipments in May 1946—followed and dramatized by Byrnes' tough Stuttgart speech in September.⁴⁸

This shift occurred at the same time that policy makers began to dramatize the bomb as a strategic factor. The United States stockpile of assembled weapons was actually quite small, but the potential of the nuclear monopoly was also obviously extraordinary—as was advertised by the spectacular atomic tests in June 1946 at the Bikini Atoll in the Pacific.⁴⁹ Code named "Operation Crossroads," the tests took place at the same time Byrnes and Molotov were again trying to reach agreement over Germany. *Pravda* took note of the mushroom cloud over Bikini and accused Washington of plotting an atomic war.⁵⁰ And as the arsenal grew (by 1948 there were 50 weapons ready for use) the Truman Administration steadily found the courage to act more forcefully—and unilaterally—in Germany.

Reams have been written about the extreme Russian security fears concerning the German threat. Stalin, in Khrushchev's judgment, "lived in terror of an enemy attack." The Soviet Premier observed in April 1945 that Germany "will recover, and very quickly"—but apparently initially he believed "quickly" meant ten to fifteen years.⁵¹ Sometime at the end of 1947 (as Michael McGwire observes in a recent study), "Stalin shifted focus...to the more immediate threat of war within 5-6 years against a capitalist coalition led by the Anglo-Saxon powers."⁵²

Declassified Soviet documents offer additional insight. For instance, the Soviet Ambassador to Washington, Nikolai Novikov, painted a deeply disturbing picture of American intentions towards the Soviet Union in 1946. Citing the American "establishment of a system of naval and air bases stretching far beyond the boundaries of the United States," and the "creation of ever newer types of weapons," Novikov believed that Washington was preparing for war. In the heart of Europe, he stressed, the United States was taking "completely inadequate measures for the demilitarization of Germany." Instead, "the United States is considering the possibility of terminating the Allied occupation of German territory before the main tasks of the occupation—the demilitarization and democratization of Germany—have been implemented. This would create the prerequisites for the revival of an imperialist Germany, which the United States plans to use in a future war on its side."⁵³

Russian fears of Germany were fully understood by United States leaders. Ambassador Averell Harriman, for instance, later recalled:

c7 Stalin was afraid of Germany, Krushchev was afraid of Germany, the present people [Brezhnev] are afraid of Germany—and *I* am afraid of Germany.... They [the Soviets] have a feeling that the Germans can arouse a situation which will involve us and that will lead to a disaster.... And this is something very important for us to consider.⁵⁴

Obviously the critical turning point came with the decision to partition Germany and rearm West Germany. American leaders recognized that even the restoration of significant German economic power would be viewed as a threat to the Soviet Union—and that this would have quite specific repercussions. At a Cabinet meeting in early 1947, Secretary of State George C. Marshall predicted that because of what the U.S. was doing in Germany the Soviet Union would have to “clamp down completely” on Czechoslovakia, and that when they did, it would be a “purely defensive move.”⁵⁵

Was Marshall's basic insight into a critical dynamic feature of the early Cold War correct—that Soviet policy in Central and Eastern Europe was (a) primarily defensive and (b) a reaction to American policy toward Germany? It is impossible to know, of course, but others also recognized the central point early on. In his columns at the time, Walter Lippmann, for instance, regularly pointed out the obvious connection between what happened in Germany and what happened in Eastern Europe.⁵⁶ Unless the German problem were settled first, he urged, the Russians were unlikely ever to relax their hold on Eastern Europe. Lippmann believed that Byrnes' strategy of pressing forward on Eastern Europe without simultaneously promoting a reasonable settlement of the German issue was demanding too much. American policy thereby made the best the enemy of the good.⁵⁷ “We must not set up a German government in the two or three Western zones,” Lippmann urged John Foster Dulles in 1947. “We must not make a separate peace with it.”⁵⁸ A steadily expanding body of research and archival evidence suggests that Marshall's fundamental insight and Lippmann's early judgement offer the most plausible explanation for what came to be one of the most dramatic and painful features of the Cold War—Stalin's “clamp down” not only in Czechoslovakia, but throughout Eastern Europe.

The Soviet archives have yet to divulge anything truly definitive about Stalin's intentions at the end of World War II. However, even Harriman, who is usually portrayed as a hardliner in early postwar dealings with Moscow, thought the Soviet dictator had no firm plan at the outset. “I had

a feeling," Harriman observed, "that they were considering and weighing the pros and cons of cooperating with us in the post-war world and getting the benefit of our cooperation in reconstruction." In the spring of 1945, John J. McCloy confided to his diary that it was "little wonder" that these "two greatest powers" should "walk stiff-legged around the ring a bit. It is a natural human process which is going on and will go on in a much more acute form in...Germany before we emerge on a sound working basis."⁵⁹

Modern scholarship has in fact uncovered far more indications of ambivalence—and indeed, great caution and cooperation—in Soviet policy during 1945 and 1946 than is commonly recognized. (See Appendix II.) Of course, Soviet policy in Eastern Europe was to shift—and shift dramatically—especially after 1947 and 1948. Along with the announcement of the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan also appears to have been far more threatening to Stalin than was previously understood. It suggested the creation of a powerful "economic magnet" to draw Eastern Europe into the Western orbit.⁶⁰ However, once it was clear that Germany was to be rearmed, the "clamp down" in Eastern Europe took on an irrevocable quality.

"rearmament and return"

This brings us back to our central thesis. To begin with, we believe it difficult to disagree with the judgement that the United States decision to rearm West Germany was made possible—and *only made possible*—by the atomic bomb.

Modern writers often forget the degree of concern about the former Nazi state which existed throughout the top American foreign policy establishment in the early post-war years. Even after the outbreak of the Korean War—and even *with* the atomic bomb—Truman's High Commissioner in Germany, John J. McCloy, for instance, expressed opposition to the creation of a German national army.⁶¹ So, too, did his successor, James B. Conant. And when they changed their minds, both men had to deal with the unrelenting opposition of the French. As late as August 1950, the State Department declared it had "opposed, and still strongly opposes, the creation of German national forces."⁶²

Furthermore, President Truman himself was personally deeply worried about the Germans—again, *even with the bomb*. Here is only one of many indications, a memo to Secretary of State Acheson in June of 1950:

We certainly don't want to make the same mistake that was made after World War I when Germany was authorized to train one hundred thousand soldiers, principally for maintaining order locally in Germany. As you know, that hundred thousand was used for the basis of training the greatest war machine that ever came forth in European history.⁶³

Truman was also well aware of the fact that he faced very powerful domestic political opposition to rearming a nation which had so recently caused the deaths of so many American boys. "From today's perspective, the rearmament of Germany seems natural and almost inevitable," Frank Ninkovich writes in an important recent study. "To achieve it, however, American policy makers had to clear a long series of hurdles, including self-doubts, widespread European reluctance, and Soviet obstructionism.... The amazing thing, then, is not that rearmament took place with such enormous difficulty, but that it happened at all."⁶⁴

Amazing, indeed! All but unimaginable, we believe, in the absence of nuclear weapons—and for a second reason directly related to Roosevelt's fundamental judgement. In the early post-war era Roosevelt's assumption that the American people were not likely to support the creation of a major conventional military force was verified. There was an overwhelming demand for rapid demobilization after the war. In June 1945, the United States had more than twelve million men and women under arms. One year later the figure was less than three million, and by June of 1947 demobilization had left all the armed services with no more than one and one half million personnel.⁶⁵ Furthermore, Congress twice defeated Universal Military Training (in 1947 and 1948) and defense spending in general declined rapidly during the first post-war years.

The point to grasp is that these domestic political realities left policy makers empty-handed. They did not have what was required in the way of conventional forces to hold down the Germans. Given such realities—and considering the extraordinary difficulty of achieving German rearmament even with American possession of the atomic bomb—we suggest that it is all but impossible to imagine the early rearmament of the former Nazi enemy had there been no atomic bomb. Put another way, had the scientific-technical track of development which produced the knowledge pre-requisite to making an atomic weapon not by chance reached the point it had by 1939, the central weapon in the U.S. post-war diplomatic arsenal would not have existed.⁶⁶

The full-scale "Cold War" which followed on these critical early developments cannot (and need not) be re-analyzed in this space.* To be quite clear, however, we do not contend that the American-Soviet relationships would have been a tranquil sea of cooperation. We are suggesting that subsequent years of unusual and dangerous militarization of foreign policy are a very special historical construct which

* See Appendix I. See also Gar Alperovitz and Kai Bird, "The Centrality of the Bomb," *Foreign Policy*, No. 94, Spring 1994.

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PROBLEM
(for Q-r)!

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Wg. rearmament?
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To keep
Sov. out
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needs to be explained on its own terms—and that the particular coincidence of timing which linked particular developments in nuclear physics with particular developments in world affairs had particular consequences.

Appendix I

The Atom Bomb, Korea and the Cold War

Very few would disagree with the proposition that the Korean War was itself a second crucial fulcrum upon which the Cold War pivoted. To cite just a few particulars: NSC 68, most scholars accept, was a document going nowhere in early 1950; the defense budget was being cut not raised.⁶⁷ The political drama surrounding the Korean War permitted both an escalation in Cold War hysteria—and an extraordinary overall escalation in military spending *in general*. Before Korea such spending was in the four percent of GNP range; during the war it peaked at nearly fourteen percent. After Korea it stabilized for the decade of the 1950s at roughly ten percent of GNP—unimaginable levels of expenditure prior to this time. (And this, in turn, of course, established a structure of forces and political attitudes without which the subsequent intervention in Vietnam is difficult to imagine.) Most importantly, almost certainly the re-arming of Germany became possible only in the domestic political atmosphere which accompanied the chaotic Korean conflict and the qualitative political shift in Cold War tensions which accompanied the war.

However, as General Omar Bradley put it, Korea was "...the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and...the wrong enemy." The fact is a major commitment of forces in Korea would probably have been all but impossible had the United States not been able to protect its global flank in Europe with the implicit threat of nuclear weapons.⁶⁸ But if, as is widely acknowledged, the rearming of Germany *and* the reconstruction of a major military capacity *both* flowed politically from the Korean War decision—then we suggest the entire scenario must also be understood to have depended ultimately upon the odd coincidence of historical timing which put nuclear weapons in U.S. hands at a particular moment in the twentieth century.

Appendix II

Evidence of Caution and Ambivalence in Stalin's Policy Toward Western Europe and the United States Immediately After World War II

Soviet doctrine in 1946, as enunciated in Stalin's famous, much-debated, "election" speech of Feb. 9, 1946, held that the United States and Great Britain could co-exist with the Soviet system, which was ready to accord "special attention" to "expanding the production of consumer goods." If, according to Leninist doctrine, war was inevitable, Stalin suggested it more probable that it would occur between rival capitalist states. The

Soviet Union would be spared. [Albert Resis, op. cit., "Stalin, the Politburo, and the Onset of the Cold War," p. 16.]

Here is a short list of developments which helped produce judgments like Harriman's: (see p. 10 above)

- General elections in Hungary in the fall of 1945 held under Soviet supervision resulted in the defeat of Communist-supported groups.
- In September 1945, Moscow unilaterally withdrew troops from Norway, despite its long-standing claims on Bear Island and Spitzbergen.
- In the wake of the December 1945 Moscow agreements, the government in Romania was enlarged to include non-communists, and both the U.S. and Britain recognized it.
- The Soviet military also withdrew from Czechoslovakia at this time—and free elections produced a non-communist, coalition government.
- In the spring of 1946 troop withdrawals were also carried out from the Danish island of Bornholm.
- In accord with his "percentage agreement" with Churchill, Stalin abandoned the Greek communists at a critical juncture in their civil war, leaving Greece within the Western sphere of influence.
- In Austria, the Soviet army supervised free elections in their occupation zone and, of course, withdrew after the signing of the Austrian Peace Treaty in 1955.
- Stalin warned the French Communist leader, Maurice Thorez against attempting "to seize power by force since to do so would probably precipitate an international conflict from which the Soviet Union could hardly emerge victorious." (U.S. intelligence obtained a report on this conversation in November 1946.) [William Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy*, op. cit. p. 134-135.]
- Despite a short delay Soviet troops were *in fact* withdrawn from Iran—a country bordering on the Soviet Union—after a brief and in retrospect rather modest international dispute.
- Perhaps most revealingly, former Soviet officials who had defected to the West documented the fact that important railway lines running from the Soviet Union through Eastern Europe were pulled up in the very early postwar period. The working assumption was that since there would be only a short occupation, Soviet forces should remove as much useful material as possible as fast as possible.
- Neither was Stalin pursuing an aggressive policy in the Far East during these early years. Indeed, for a good period of time Stalin was supporting Chiang Kai Shek—much to the lasting chagrin of Chinese Communist leaders; and Red Army troops were withdrawn from Manchuria in May 1946.

Finland and Austria—neutral but free-standing states—serve as alternative models for border-area nations which might plausibly have been acceptable to the Soviet Union had a different dynamic been established after World War II.

Notes

1. Important works on the role of nuclear weapons in the cold war include: David Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 29-64; David Holloway, *Stalin & the Bomb* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Marc Trachtenberg, "A Wasting Asset: American Strategy

and the Shifting Nuclear Balance, 1949-1954," *International Security* (Winter 1988-89), 3; John Mueller, "The Essential Irrelevance of Nuclear Weapons," *International Security* (Fall 1988); Barton Bernstein, "The Quest for Security: American Foreign Policy and International Control of Atomic Energy, 1942-1946," *Journal of American History*; David Alan Rosenberg, "The Origins of Overkill: Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy, 1945-1960," *International Security* (Spring 1983) and Richard K. Betts, "A Nuclear Golden Age? The Balance Before Parity," *International Security* (Winter 1986-87); Marek Thee, *Military Technology, Military Strategy and the Arms Race*, 1986), Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration and the Cold War, 1945-52* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992). See also Gregg Herken, *The Winning Weapon* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980); Robert L. Messer, *The End of an Alliance: James F. Byrnes, Roosevelt, Truman and the Origins of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982) and Lloyd C. Gardner, Walter F. LaFeber & Thomas J. McCormick, *Creation of the American Empire*, Vol. 2: *U.S. Diplomatic History Since 1893* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1976). For a general treatment of "atomic diplomacy" issues, see Lloyd Garner, "The Atomic Temptation, 1945-54," in Lloyd Gardner, ed. *Redefining the Past: Essays in Diplomatic History in Honor of William Appleman Williams* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 1986). Though the attitude of many top policy-makers is clear, David Rosenberg has shown that the U.S. did not, in fact, have a full-blown "operational" nuclear capability during the early Cold War years. [David Alan Rosenberg, "The Origins of Overkill: Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy, 1945-1960," *International Security* (Spring 1983).]

2. Hans A. Bethe, *The Road From Los Alamos* (New York: The American Institute of Physics, 1991), p. 24.

3. Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), pp. 218-220.

4. William Lanouette, *Genius in the Shadows* (New York: Scribners, 1992), p. 102 for Szilard patent on cyclotron, p. 175 for Hahn's discovery of uranium fission, and p. 176 for Fermi's 1934 neutron bombardment experiments.

5. Though this point was stressed in Alperovitz's 1965 edition of *Atomic Diplomacy* (pp. 205-24 of new edition), few critics have focused on the implications of the bomb on Truman's policy towards Germany. See also the new Introduction to *Atomic Diplomacy* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), pp. 56-57. Recently, German scholar Bernd Greiner has undertaken important research on this and related problems. See, for instance, his "Zwischen Demontage und Atombombe," *Die Zeit*, Nr. 34-24 August 1990 Seite 17. See also Greiner's *Die Marganathan-Legende: zur Geschichte eines umstritten Plans* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1995).

6. Herbert Feis, *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin: The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), p. 530.

7. McCloy Diary, April 30, 1945.

8. Ambrose, *Rise to Globalism*, p. 70.

9. Richard Barnett, *The Rocket's Red: When America Goes to War—the Presidents and the People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), p. 251.

10. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, herein cited as FRUS, Malta and Yalta, p. 286.

11. FRUS, Malta and Yalta, p. 617.

12. In January of 1946, four thousand GI demonstrators in Frankfurt were stopped at bayonet point as they descended on the Supreme Commander, General Joseph T.

McNarney, screaming, "We want to go home!" (Richard Barnet, *The Rocket's Red Glare: War, Politics, and the American Presidency* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), p. 249).

13. In October 1945, a Gallup Poll reported that less than eight percent of the American people thought foreign policy issues "most vital." The Truman Administration was unable to resist overwhelming popular sentiment to de-mobilize the 12.3 million men and women in uniform. By the spring of 1945 there were less than 1.5 million soldiers in the army and Congress was in no mood to back legislation for universal military training. [See Richard Barnet, *The Rocket's Red Glare* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), pp. 249-251.] *for Henry?*

14. FRUS, Pots. I, p. 504.

15. FRUS, Malta and Yalta, p. 970.

16. Roosevelt's plans for Germany were eventually formalized in JCS 1067 which at its core was basically a watered-down version of the Morgenthau Plan. See Jean Edward Smith, *Lucius D. Clay: An American Life* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1990), p. 202; Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991). For an important re-assessment of Roosevelt's policies in general, see: Warren F. Kimball, *The Juggler: Franklin Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 159. See also Michael McGwire, "Perestroika and Soviet National Security" (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1991).

17. FRUS, Malta and Yalta, p. 971.

18. Melvyn P. Leffler, "Adherence to Agreements: Yalta and the Experiences of the Early Cold War," *International Security* (Summer 1986), 88-123; Albert Resis, "Stalin, the Politburo, and the Onset of the Cold War, 1945-1946," Carl Beck Papers, No. 701, April 1988, University of Pittsburgh Center for Russian and East European Studies; Warren F. Kimball, *The Juggler: Franklin Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 159.

19. For a statement of this general logic in the more modern period, see Brzezinski, Zbigniew, "The Future of Yalta," *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1984-85).

20. Melvyn Leffler, "Adherence to Agreements: Yalta and the Experiences of the Early Cold War," 11 (Summer 1986), 88-123, cited material from pp. 105-106. Again, detailed studies based on recent documentary evidence have confirmed earlier general assessments. And, again, the complexities of the reparations discussion have been reviewed elsewhere and need not be reproduced here. [See, for example, Bruce Kuklick, *American Policy and the Division of Germany: The Clash with Russia Over Reparations* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1972); Carolyn Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line: the American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944-49* (draft copy of forthcoming book from Cambridge University Press); Philip A. Baggeley, "Reparations, Security, and the Industrial Disarmament of Germany: Origins of the Potsdam Decisions," Ph.D. thesis, Yale University, 1980.]

21. Though there is still a dispute about the exact meaning of the German reparations understanding, at Yalta Roosevelt and Stalin agreed that Germany should pay reparations and they settled on a rough figure of \$20 billion "as a basis for discussion," half of which was to go to the Soviet Union. By July 1945, however, when the Allies reconvened at Potsdam, Byrnes rejected the \$20 billion figure and insisted that whatever reparations the Soviets wanted should be taken exclusively from the Soviet zone of occupied Germany. See Melvyn P. Leffler, "Adherence to Agreements: Yalta and the Experiences of the Early Cold War," *International Security* (Summer 1986), 95, 105; Albert Resis, "Stalin, the Politburo, and the Onset of the Cold War."

22. Baggeley, "Reparations, Security, and the Industrial Disarmament of Germany," p. 419.

23. FRUS, Pots. I, p. 519.
24. FRUS, Pots. II, p. 845; FRUS, Pots. I, pp. 547-548.
25. FRUS, Pots. II, pp. 942-943.
26. FRUS, Pots. II, p. 943.
27. Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line*, p. 149 of manuscript.
28. "Journal," July 28, 1945 (2-1-51), "Chrono File," Box 19, Davies Papers, Library of Congress, herein as LC.
29. "Diary," July 29, 1945 ("Potsdam Diary"), "Chron. File," Box 19, LC.
30. See Walter Brown Diary ["WB's Book"], July 17, 1945. Folder 602; Byrnes Papers, Clemson University Library.
31. FRUS, Pots. II, p. 1361.
32. FRUS, Pots. II, p. 232.
33. Stimson Diary, July 23, 1945.
34. FRUS, Pots. II, pp. 274-75.
35. FRUS, Pots. II, p. 279.
36. FRUS, Pots. II, pp. 484-485.
37. Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*, p. 85.
38. Truman Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, p. 522.
39. Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War*, p. 244.
40. FRUS, Pots. II, pp. 1485-1487.
41. FRUS, Pots. II, pp. 1491-1492.
42. Stimson Diary, April 19, 1945.
43. FRUS, Pots. II, p. 756.
44. "Memorandum of Conversations at the White House on August 22, 1945 Between the President and General De Gaulle," President's Secretary File, Truman Library, courtesy of Melvyn P. Leffler.

45. Recent scholarship has also demonstrated how early and how determined the U.S. was to develop West Germany and integrate it into a Western alliance. Carolyn Eisenberg, in her recently published book, *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944-1949*, dates the decision to early 1946, by which time the New Dealers in the Truman Administration had "lost control of America's German policy." (Eisenberg manuscript, p. 15.)

German unification, even as part of an overall European settlement, was to be avoided at all cost. A neutral Germany was anathema to Washington's policy makers. See Kai Bird, *The Chairman: John J. McCloy / The Making of the American Establishment* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), Wolfram F. Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe: Forty Years of German Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). Thomas Alan Schwartz, in his book, *America's Germany: John J. McCloy and the Federal Republic of Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), disagrees about the timing of the decision to divide Germany. Schwartz argues that Truman, Acheson and McCloy "did not accept that Germany would be divided and rearmed by our side until after the outbreak of the Korean war." Schwartz also believes that the strategy of "dual containment holds only for the period after the Soviet testing of the bomb in August 1949." (Schwartz letter to Kai Bird, September 28, 1993) Schwartz points out that McCloy argued even after the outbreak of hostilities in Korea that it would be a mistake to create a "German national army now or in the foreseeable future." (Schwartz, p. 130.) But we would suggest that McCloy's short-lived opposition—he changed his mind within weeks—was due to his perspective as a High Commissioner whose top internal priority in West Germany was "democratization." Dean Acheson's marching orders for McCloy in the spring of 1949 were clear: he was to "go ahead with the establishment of a Western

government [in West Germany] come hell or high water." Kai Bird, *The Chairman*, p. 311.)

46. Peter Lyon, *Eisenhower: Portrait of the Hero* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1974), p. 377.

Edgar Snow, *Journey to the Beginning* (New York: Random House, 1958), pp. 360-361.

47. In the early postwar period General Lucius Clay judged that "the entire record of the Control Council showed that the USSR was willing to cooperate with the other powers in operating Germany as a single political and economic unit." [Jean Edward Smith, *Lucius D. Clay: An American Life* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1990), p. 283.]

48. Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), p. 319. Michael McGwire, op. cit., p. 27. McGwire also dates the shift in American policy to the spring of 1946, when the U.S. unilaterally decided to renege on the Potsdam decision to treat Germany as a single economic unit. Instead, the American objective became to integrate "a rehabilitated Western Germany into the capitalist economic system." At Stuttgart, Byrnes delivered a ringing endorsement for the rebuilding of a united Germany in which the German people would be "the primary responsibility for running their own affairs." Jean Edward Smith has recently argued that Clay and Secretary of State James F. Byrnes nonetheless still advocated a "policy of tolerance, patience and respect" for the Soviet Union. Clay was dismayed by Byrnes' abrupt replacement in early 1947 with Gen. Marshall, when, Smith writes, "American policy, both toward the Soviet Union and in Germany, changed abruptly." It is important to note that even at this late date Clay still believed an agreement on Germany with the Soviets was possible. [Jean Edward Smith, *Lucius D. Clay: An American Life* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990), pp. 386-390, 414-415.] Many others, including, for instance, John Lewis Gaddis, mark the turning point in U.S. policy as Feb.-March 1946. [John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-47* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1972), pp. 284, 304-306, 312-315. See also Deborah Welch Larson, *Origins of Containment: A Psychological Explanation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 259.]

49. David Alan Rosenberg, "U.S. Nuclear Stockpile, 1945 to 1950," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, May 1982; James L. Gormly, *From Potsdam to the Cold War*, (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1990), p. 168.

50. Ibid., p. 168. By the summer of 1947 the Joint Chiefs of Staff had prepared their first operationally oriented atomic target list. [David Alan Rosenberg, "The Origins of Overkill: Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy, 1945-60," *International Security* (Spring 1983), 12.]

51. William Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy: From Entente to Detente to Cold War* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), p. 134. Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, (Boston, Little Brown, 1970), p. 393.) See also Andrei Gromyko, *Memoirs* (New York, 1989).

52. Michael McGwire, op. cit., p. 33.

53. Amb. Nikolai Novikov 'Long Telegram' to For. Min. Viacheslav Molotov, Sept. 27, 1946, (provided initially through the courtesy of Professor Gaddis Smith). Novikov also observed, "The ascendance to power of President Truman, a politically unstable person but with certain conservative tendencies, and the subsequent appointment of [James] Byrnes as Secretary of State meant a strengthening of the influence on U.S. foreign policy of the most reactionary circles of the Democratic Party." For an indepth analysis of the Novikov cable, see Melvyn Leffler's unpub-

62. Department of State memo, 16 August 1950; FRUS: 1950, 3:213.
63. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, Vol. IV, p. 688.
64. Frank Ninkovich, *Germany and the United States: The Transformation of the German Question since 1945* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988), pp. 82-83.
65. John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War 1941-47* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), p. 261.
66. James G. Hershberg, "Explosion in the Offing: German Rearmament and American Diplomacy, 1953-1955," *Diplomatic History* (Fall 1992), 531.
67. Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 369-370.
68. Omar Bradley, *A General's Life: An Autobiography by the General of the Army* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983). Bradley indicates clearly why the Army was extremely reluctant to get involved in any war in Asia, see especially p. 558. Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. II, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). Kathryn Weathersby, *Soviet Aims in Korea and the Origins of the Korean War, 1945-1950: New Evidence from the Russian Archives*, Working Paper No. 8, Cold War History Project, The Woodrow Wilson Center, November 1993, pp. 24, 32.

lished essay, "On Novikov's Telegram," and Kenneth M. Jensen, ed., *Origins of the Cold War: The Novikov, Kennan, and Roberts 'Long Telegrams' of 1946*, (Washington, DC, 1991). For other actions taken by Washington that Stalin perceived as hostile, see: Thomas G. Paterson, *Soviet-American Confrontation Postwar Reconstruction and the Origins of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 258. See also John Gimbel, *The American Occupation of Germany: Politics and the Military, 1945-1949* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968).

54. "Off the Record Discussion of the Origins of the Cold War," Oral History conducted by Arthur Schlesinger, May 31, 1967, Harriman Papers, LC.

55. Kai Bird, *The Chairman*, p. 308.

56. Walter Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1943), p. 152. By the end of the war, Lippmann judged that even neutralization was too much to expect in Eastern Europe, a region which realistically would fall within a Soviet sphere of influence. An independent Poland, he wrote in 1944, could survive "only if it is allied with Russia." [Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1980), pp. 409, 415.] See also Martin Herz, *Beginnings of the Cold War* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1966); William Appleman Williams, *American-Russian Relations, 1891-1947* (New York: Octagon Books, 1952, 1971); James P. Warburg, *Germany: Bridge or Battleground?* (New York: Harcourt, 1947); James P. Warburg, *Germany: Key to Peace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953).

57. Richard J. Barnet, *The Rocket's Red Glare* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), pp. 260, 269. In 1943, Lippmann warned that a peaceful accommodation with the Soviets after the defeat of Nazi Germany depended solely on whether the East European border states adopted a policy of neutralization and whether Russia could accept neutralization: "The best interests of the United States would be served by such a solution. It would not bring us or the members of the Atlantic community into conflict with Russia. It would give Poland the Danubian states, and the Balkans the only form of security we are able to offer them, and it would give Russia security resting on the fact that the nations of Central and Eastern Europe, after Germany has been disarmed, could not become the spearheads of a western coalition." [Walter Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1943), p. 152.] See also Richard Barnet article manuscript, "Lippmann, Kennan, and the Cold War," 10/11/90, p. 9.

58. Cited by Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, p. 449.

59. "Off the Record Discussion of the Origins of the Cold War," Oral History conducted by Arthur Schlesinger, May 31, 1967, p. 11-12, Harriman Papers, LC; John J. McCloy diary, 4/30/45, Box 1/3, McCloy Papers, Amherst College.

60. Vladislav M. Zubok, lecture presented at Institute for Policy Studies seminar on the Cold War, March 28, 1991. Zubok argues that Stalin perceived the Marshall Plan as an "attempt at encirclement." Zubok further suggests that Stalin in 1946 did not expect imminent war, and that he was not surprised by the Truman doctrine. See also James L. Gormly's argument that in the wake of the Marshall Plan, "Stalin stopped his efforts to restore life to the Grand Alliance," and his report that one Russian official at the time complained, "The imperialists will not let go.... They wish to encircle the Soviet Union.... No hand, not even one armed with the atomic bomb, will succeed." [James L. Gormly, *From Potsdam to the Cold War*, p. 214.]

61. Kai Bird, *The Chairman*, pp. 332, 340.